

Remarks/Arguments

Claims 1-7 and 9-27 are pending in the present application. Claims 10-24, 26 and 27 are withdrawn from consideration.

Claims 1, 10, 17 and 25 have been amended to more particularly define the claimed invention. These claims have been amended to recite that the ribozyme-driven excision of target sequence results in formation of two intermediates, each having a 5' and 3' end. The 3' end of the first intermediate is spliced to a guanosine residue at the 5' end of the second intermediate. This claims amendment is supported by the disclosure of the reactions in Figure 1. No new matter is added by this amendment to the claims.

I. Rejection of Claims 1-7, 9 and 25 Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

Claims 1-7, 9 and 25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as allegedly being indefinite. It is respectfully submitted that the grounds of this rejection are rendered moot by the amendments to the claims.

II. Rejection of Claims Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, First Paragraph

Claims 1-7, 9 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as allegedly failing to comply with the written description requirement. The Examiner asserts that the specification does not provide the structure of the claimed ribozyme required for guanosine independence.

This rejection is respectfully traversed as follows.

The specification describes the claimed ribozyme in a manner sufficient to enable the skilled practitioner to construct and use the claimed invention. The Group I ribozyme of the invention has been modified to contain at least two modifiable recognition elements. One of the recognition elements is complementary to non-native target RNA sequence within a substrate

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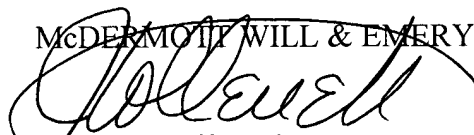
and another of the recognition elements stabilizes binding of the ribozyme to a trans-excision splicing (TES) reaction intermediate product. Thus, the claimed ribozyme is distinguished from self-splicing ribozymes of the prior art in that it has been modified to recognize non-native target sequence. No further modifications to the group I ribozyme need be made. As such, the specification meets the written description requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112.

It is respectfully submitted that the amendments above place the application in condition for allowance, an early notification thereof being earnestly solicited. However, if any issues remain outstanding, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned so the prosecution may be expedited.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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